

10-31-2014

Robert P. T. Coffin Correspondence

Robert Peter Tristram Coffin 1892-1955

Ruth Coffin 1891-1947

Mrs. R.P.T. Coffin 1891-1947

Henry Ernest Dunnack 1867-1938

Maine State Library

Marion Cobb Fuller

Maine State Library

See next page for additional authors

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Creator(s)

Robert Peter Tristram Coffin 1892-1955, Ruth Coffin 1891-1947, Mrs. R.P.T. Coffin 1891-1947, Henry Ernest Dunnack 1867-1938, Marion Cobb Fuller, Hilda McLeod, Hilda McLeod Jacob, and Theresa C. Stuart 1885-1965

COFFIN, Robert P. Tristram.

Born at Brunswick, March 18, 1892.

July 1, 1929.

Robert Tristram Coffin,
Aurora, New York.

Dear Mr. Coffin:

For several years, the Maine State Library has been assembling a Maine Author Collection with the idea of creating here a permanent exhibition collection of books written by persons born in this state, or intimately associated with it. We are sending you a Maine Library Bulletin which contains an article about the Collection, written by Mr. John Clair Minot, at the time it was started, in 1922. We have met with a cordial response from every author to whom we have written, and the collection of the works of contemporary writers is steadily increasing.

At the recent session of the Maine Legislature a resolve was passed providing for a new State Library building. A feature of the building will be a room devoted to the Maine Author Collection, adequately accommodating the books and with facilities for research work by persons interested in Maine's literary development.

Since Maine has the honor of claiming you as one of her native authors, we wish the privilege of adding your books to the collection. We do not ask you to give us the books - we are very willing to pay for them - but we do ask you to autograph each book, and any explanatory notes relative to the writing of the book which you care to add will greatly enhance its present interest and future value. In connection with the collection we are assembling first hand biographical information about our authors, so will you please send us data about yourself - a photograph, and, if possible, a photograph of your birthplace. We realize that we are asking a great deal, but we hope that your interest in your native state is great enough to induce you to take the trouble of assembling and autographing for us a complete collection of your works.

Will you please send us, when it is convenient for you to do so, the books on the enclosed list, with any others which may have escaped our attention. Please make your bill in duplicate to the Maine State Library.

We shall be very appreciative of your co-operation in making the Maine Author Collection complete.

Very truly yours,

Pennellville,
Brunswick, Me.
July 15, 1929.

Mr. Henry E. Dunnack,
State Librarian,
Maine State Library,
Augusta, Maine.

Dear Mr. Dunnack:

I shall be delighted to send the copies of my books, autographed, and with such comments written about their composition as I can find time to add, together with the biographical data.

As I am at present hard at work upon the proofs of another book, I should like, however, to defer sending this material until the end of the summer. I shall see to it, though, that you have it before I leave my summer residence for my Wells College address in the middle of September.

Sincerely yours,


Robert P. Tristram Coffin

November 7, 1929

Professor Robert Peter Tristram Coffin,
Wells College,
Aurora, New York.

My dear Professor Coffin:

Several days ago we received from the publishers a copy of your very delightful new book, "An attic room". Since it is not autographed, we are sending it to you and we hope that you have not forgotten to send us autographed copies of your other books. As we wrote you, we do not expect you to give us your books, unless you choose to do so, so please make your bill in duplicate to the Maine State Library.

Before the library copy came, I had purchased your book, having had it called to my attention by Mr. Campbell of Loring, Short and Harmon. I found that he had not praised it too highly. For some time I have read your verse with interest and pleasure, as it appeared in various periodicals, but I did not know about your prose. "An attic room" is a real delight, a delight which I plan to share with a number of Maine friends, one in California, one in England, and one in Honolulu, at Christmas time, and I wish that everyone who ever loved Maine could read "Princes of the Coast".

Very truly yours,

MAINE STATE LIBRARY.
BY MCF

WELLS COLLEGE
AURORA-ON-CAYUGA, NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

November 27, 1929.

Miss Marion Cobb Fuller,
Maine State Library,
Augusta, Maine.

Dear Miss Fuller:

I have sent off the copy of AN ATTIC ROOM, which you forwarded to me, autographed as you wished. And rest assured that I certainly shall see to it that you have a copy of my earlier books eventually, autographed also. If you will give me leeway to the Christmas holidays, I hope to attend to this matter. And among my works do you wish to include a textbook, of seventeenth-century English prose, published by Harcourt, Brace, which I have just seen through the press?--(On second thought, though, I think I remember asking Harcourt to forward you a copy of that, so that is settled!) In the vacation, too, I may be able to send you the other material Mr. Dunnack wanted, autobiographical mainly, portrait, etc.--that is, if you still wish it.

Thanks for your word of generous praise of the essays. I am glad to hear that you liked especially my apologia for Maine and my own people. Though far from my native soil in the winter, I still keep a strong root-hold in my summer place, an old sea-captains' house in Pennellville, three miles out of Brunswick. I could not live without my three months of Maine per year. If you are ever down in those parts in the summer, drop in to see us.

Sincerely yours,


Robert P. T. Coffin

C O P Y

May 22 1930

Professor Robert P. Tristram Coffin,
Wells College,
Aurora-on-Cayuga, New York.

My dear Professor Coffin;-

Every time I look at the shelf in the Maine Author Collection where autographed copies of your books ought to be and aren't I think that something ought to be done about it. Now I am doing it! If I seem unpleasantly insistent please forgive me. I am sending by parcel post your five books, Dew and Bronze, An Attic Room, The Golden Falcon, Book of Crowns and Cottages, and Christchurch. Will you autograph each one (perhaps if you are not too busy you will add inscriptions) and then return them to us? I enclose a label and postage for their return.

I know you must be very busy, and perhaps you hate wrapping packages, but we do want those autographed copies in our collection.

I sent "An Attic Room" to a Maine cousin in London and she wrote me that nothing she received Christmas gave her such delight, especially the Fish Chowder chapter! The book has been extremely popular here--a long waiting list all the time.

MCF

WELLS COLLEGE
AURORA-ON-CAYUGA, NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS
English

June 2, 1930.

Miss Marion Cobb Fuller,
Maine State Library,
Augusta, Maine.

Dear Miss Fuller:

I am properly ashamed of myself for neglecting to collect my published works and forwarding them to you. Now that you have done it for me, I feel that the best way for to me to make it up to my state is by adding my latest book to the others, LAUD, STORM CENTER OF STUART ENGLAND, as a gift to the State Library. I hope you will accept ^{this} as absolving me of my laziness. At any rate, I am enclosing it along with the five you sent and forwarding the parcel by express to you tomorrow. I have autographed the six books and added something in the way of an inscription in each. I did the ATTIC ROOM late last autumn for you, by the way, but I am glad to do it again. This will complete my works to date, with the exception of a textbook which I edited, with Alexander M. Witherspoon of Yale, A BOOK OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY PROSE, published by Harcourt, Brace, New York City, last October. Have you, or do you wish to have, this? It contains examples of my critical writings---especially the first three sections of the preface. I asked Harcourt to send you a copy long ago. If you have it and wish it to be autographed, and the parts that I did marked by me, please send it along, too.

And now may I ask a favor of you in turn. I have been asked by the editor to do some biographies for the DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY. Among these I am asked to do a biography of a Maine poet, Frances Parker (Laughton) Mace, whose dates are 1836-1899. Can you help me? I am seeking this poet's works, letters, etc., and biographical notes upon her. I know of no better place to seek such than the library of her native state. I should be immensely grateful if you could send me any works that you have by her or about her and any information that might lead to my getting in touch with sources elsewhere. If there are relatives still living, I should be eager to communicate with them. Anything you can do to help me I will appreciate greatly. And thanks in advance for the favor.

I shall keep you informed of later works of mine when they appear. I am proud my ATTIC ROOM is so popular with you and others.

With all best wishes,

Cordially yours,


Robert P. Tristram Coffin

C O P Y

June 9, 1930.

Professor Robert Tristram Coffin,
Wells College,
Auroa-on-Cayuga, New York.

Dear Professor Coffin;-

The books have arrived and I have just finished installing them on the shelves of the Maine Author Collection. Thank you for sending them and for the very delightful inscriptions which you have added to them.

You are very generous to add Laud to the others and we are delighted to have it. I am sure that it would be a mistake not to have "A book of Seventeenth Century Prose," if you are willing to take the trouble to note for us the parts which you wrote, as you suggest doing. We have not received a copy from the publishers. At your convenience will you send us an inscribed and annotated copy, making your bill for the book in duplicate to the Maine State Library?

We shall be very glad to assist you in any way we can in preparing a biographical sketch of Frances Laughton Mace and have already written to one or two places in search of information. We have very little biographical material about her here; the longest account of her career which we have as yet found is the one in the predecessor of the Dictionary of American Biography, The National cyclopedia of American Biography. We will as soon as there is time, consult our newspaper files; although she died in California there may have been obituary notices in Maine papers. One or ~~two~~ of her poems are in Griffith's Poets of Maine and we have one collection of her verse, Under Pine and Palm.

Very truly yours,

MAINE STATE LIBRARY

By MCF

C O P Y

June 11, 1930.

Professor Robert P. Tristram Coffin,
Wells College,
Aurora-on-Cayuga, New York.

My dear Dr. Coffin;-

We enclose a copy of a clipping which the Bangor Public Library lent us. It is the only item about Mrs. Mace which is available at that library, other than the references which the Maine State Library has, which I mentioned in my preceding letter.

Very truly yours,

MAINE STATE LIBRARY

By MCF

WELLS COLLEGE
AURORA-ON-CAYUGA, NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

August 15, 1930.

Miss Marion Cobb Fuller,
Maine State Library,
Augusta, Maine.

Dear Miss Fuller:

I have not forgotten about the Seventeenth-Century Prose book. I have had it on my desk for nearly two months. But I have been so busy on a new MS that has to be done on a time limit that I have not had time to mark the passages I edited as yet. But you shall have it the first week in September.

I want to appeal to you again on Mrs. Frances Laughton Mace, while thanking you at the same time for the Bangor clipping you so kindly sent. I have been able to get almost nothing on her biography beyond that in the National Cyclopaedia of American Biography. Where can I find a list of her books even? The clipping from Bangor is only an "appreciation". Surely, somewhere in the archives of the Maine Historical Association---wherever they are---there must be something on the woman chosen by that body to write the ode on the Longfellow bust that was presented to the society by England. And the papers of her native town must have had obituaries at the time of her death, July 20, 1899. I have two volumes only of her works, Legends, Lyrics, and Sonnets and Palm and Pine. These I got from the Bowdoin Library. But I am stumped now. Is Elizabeth Powers Merrill of Skowhegan (who wrote the paper you sent me the copy of) still alive? Aren't there descendents in Maine still? Can't anyone in the city of Bangor tell me a single word on this Bangor woman? I don't know where to go except to you in this dilemma. But it seems that somebody in Maine ought to come to the rescue of this Maine poet. I would be indeed grateful for any clue I might follow up. I have to have the biography done by September 15th.

You will be glad to hear, if you haven't heard already, that I was made a Doctor of Letters at Bowdoin this last June.

Sincerely yours,


Robert P. Tristram Coffin

C O P Y

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin

August 19, 1930.

Department of English

Wells College

Aurora-on-Cayuga, New York.

My dear Dr. Coffin;-

I am sorry to hear that you are having such difficulty in finding data about Frances Laughton Mace, but I am not surprised. She is one of the many, many writers of the preceeding generation about whom little material is available. One reason that we spend so much time and energy assembling material for our Maine Author Collection files is to provide material for future students of Maine's contribution to literature, when today's authors are no longer contemporaries.

I doubt whether the Maine Historical Society Association Library at Portland can assist you but of course you might try there. We have the program of the proceedings at the unveiling of the bust of Longfellow, February 27, 1885. Mrs. Mace's poem is given, along with two other poems by other persons and several speeches, but there is nothing about her. Our files of Portland newspapers are not complete and 1885 is one of the years which is missing.

The Bangor Public Library had a disastrous fire sometime around 1910 and lost a great deal of material which could not be replaced, including newspaper files, clippings, etc. I wrote to Orono as well as to Bangor, without results. As you know, Mrs. Mace went to California to live, a number of years before her death. She died there and the three of her eight children who survived her were located in the west.

C O P Y

Dr. Robert Tristram Coffin
#2

I find in the July 29th issue of the Bangor Whig and the Courier an obituary notice which I will have copied for you, although it contains little information other than that given in the National Cyclopedia of American Biography. Mrs. Elizabeth Powers Merrill of Skowhegan is no longer living. I find in the Bangor Directory a Mrs. Samuel Laughton (widow), 20 Everett Street a Mrs. John Mace (widow), 198 Union Street, and a Mr. and Mrs. Bryan J. Mace, 26 Elizabeth Avenue. Of course I have no idea whether they are connections of Mrs. France Laughton Mace.

Why don't you try writing to the Los Gatos Public Library or to the California State Library or the San Francisco Public Library. Very probably if they have ever heard of Mrs. Mace she is enrolled as a Californian author, and they may have some newspaper stories about her.

I was glad to hear that Bowdoin has awarded you an honorary degree. I heard about it last June, and duly noted it with our other biographical material about you.

We shall be glad to receive the Seventeenth Century Prose book whenever it is convenient for you to send it. I think Laud is very fine indeed, one of the best biographies I have read for a long time. And such an opening chapter.

Very truly yours,

Maine State Library

By MCF

WELLS COLLEGE
AURORA-ON-CAYUGA, NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

September 17, 1930.

Miss Marion Cobb Fuller,
MAINE STATE LIBRARY,
Augusta, Maine.

Dear Miss Fuller:

I sent you yesterday the copy of my
BOOK OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY PROSE, with the passages
that I have written or edited marked. This completes
the list of my books to date. I hope to have another
biography for you next Spring. The price of the BOOK
OF PROSE was less, to me, than the ~~\$4.50~~ indicated in-
side the cover---\$3.90, to be exact.

Let me thank you, too, for the new mater-
ial on Mrs. Mace. It was very helpful. Her biographical
sketch has been completed now, and is in the editor's
hands.

Sincerely yours,


Robert P. Tristram Coffin

C O P Y

September 29, 1930

Dr. Robert Tristram Coffin,
Wells College
Aurora-on Cayuga, New York.

Dear Dr. Coffin;-

Thank you for taking the trouble to add to the interest of the Maine Author Collection^{copy} of "A Book of Seventeenth Century Prose" by annotating it for us. It is such an interesting compilation that we shall add a copy to the general reference library. As you may recall, the Maine Author Collection is an exhibition collection and the books are never lent or used for reference.

We shall be interested in seeing the new biography. Is the subject a secret? I think that your "Laud" shows that you have a gift for writing biography which makes the subject alive.

I am glad that we could help you about Mrs. Mace and I am sorry that we had so little to offer.

I hope that you have had a pleasant Maine summer.

very truly yours

I hope that you have by this time received payment for your book. As you know, it takes some little time for the state to pay its bills.

ROBERT PETER TRISTRAM COFFIN thoroughly appreciates and understands his native state. He writes very lovely verse and his name is probably more familiar to most readers as a poet than as an essayist, but no one who loves Maine can help being glad, after reading *An Attic Room* that Professor Coffin did not confine his writing to poetry. There may be persons who think that Maine natives are not the very salt and savor of the world's people, just as there may be epicures who do not regard fish chowder as the last word in gastronomic light, but I doubt if anyone can read *Princes of the Coast*, which, as the title indicates, means the people of Maine, or *Codfish Chowder and Sun*, without wanting to try these products of the Pine Tree State. Professor Coffin, who at present is in the English department at Wells College, Aurora-on-Cayuga, New York, was born at Brunswick, Maine, March 18, 1892, the son of James William and Alice Mary (Coombs) Coffin. He graduated from Bowdoin College, *summa cum laude*, in 1915 and was Rhodes scholar from Maine at Trinity College, Oxford University, from which he received degrees in 1920 and 1921. He received a Master of Arts degree from Princeton. He has been a professor at Wells College since 1921 and is largely responsible for founding and carrying on there the Oxford idea of honor work in English. He has written the following volumes of verse, *Christ Church*, *Dew and Bronze* and the *Golden Falcon*, and a book of essays, *Book of Crowns and Cottages*. Professor Coffin writes us, "Though far from my native soil in the winter, I still keep a strong roothold in my summer place, an old sea-captain's house in Pennellville, three miles out of Brunswick. I could not live without my three months of Maine per year."

Maine Literary Bulletin
January 1930

COFFIN, Robert P. Tristram.

Inscriptions in books received June 9, 1930:

Attic room. 1929.

Inscribed for the State of Maine Library
by Robert P. Tristram Coffin, one of Maine's sons.

Almost all the people and places in this book are taken
from Maine.

And so the author can say, when he says that he has found
life jovial and beautiful, that most of the praise should go
to Maine.

Book of crowns and cottages. 1925.

Inscribed for the Maine State Library
by Robert P. Tristram Coffin

who for three years was very proud to be "the gentleman from
Maine" as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford.

Christchurch. 1924.

The Author's First Book.

Inscribed for his Maine State Library.

Robert P. Tristram Coffin.

Dew and Bronze. 1927.

Inscribed for the Maine State Library

by the author

a son of Maine

who is remembering his boyhood

in Maine

when he writes

Dew and bronze

Ship o' bed (Brunswick)

Snoozer (Harpwell)

(over)

The camphor bag (Harpswell)

Cranberryhorn school (East Harpswell)

The plowman (Maquoit)

Merrymeeting Bay (below Brunswick)

Madonna of the coverlets (Harpswell)

Now I lay me (Harpswell)

Robert P. Tristram Coffin

Golden Falcon. 1929.

Inscribed for the Maine Library
by
Robert P. Tristram Coffin

(It is in Maine that I have found the beauty set down
here in hawks and herons, a house by candlelight, moths
of a night in summer, in white feet and broken vanes,
and, above all, in the man hoeing into the evening. R. P. T. C.)

Laud. 1930.

Presented to the Maine State Library, Augusta, Maine
by
the author

one of whose proudest moments in life
was the day he was chosen, in Augusta, in November, 1915
to represent Maine State as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford.

Robert P. Tristram Coffin.

THE DUKES OF BUCKINGHAM .1931

Inscribed for
The Maine State Library
by the author,
a Maine man,
Robert P. Tristram Coffin

C O P Y

March 24, 1931

Dr. Robert Tristram Coffin,
Wells College,
Aurora -on-Cayuga , New York.

My dear Dr. Coffin;-

Will you please send us a copy of your
DUKES OF BUCKINGHAM for our Maine Author Collection? We are
writing directly to you because we are very anxious to have
the book autographed. Bills should be made in duplicate to
the Maine State Library, Augusta, Maine.

Very truly yours,

STATE LIBRARIAN

MLH

WELLS COLLEGE
AURORA-ON-CAYUGA, NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

March 29, 1931.

Mr. Henry E. Dunnack,
State Librarian,
Augusta, Me.

Dear Mr. Dunnack:

I shall be glad to send you a copy of my DUKES OF BUCKINGHAM, autographed as you wish. I hope to be able to get around to doing it ~~within~~ a week. Upon the receipt of it, will you please send me \$3.75, the cost of the book, and will you please add to the cheque \$3.75 more, the cost of LAUD: STORM CENTER OF STUART ENGLAND, which I sent you last autumn and for which I have not had reimbursement. Perhaps the fault is mine for not making out a bill in duplicate for the LAUD. But it does not seem reasonable to ask authors to go to this length. Since my Army days, I have sworn off all such red-tape. If this cannot be taken care of by clerical work in your office, I think authors should not be troubled for their autographs and the books should be bought direct.

Sincerely yours,


Robert P. Tristram Coffin

CO P Y

April 4, 1931

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin,
Wells College
Aurora-on Cayuga, New York.

Dear Dr. Coffin;-

You will never know how much I regret
our oversight in not sending you a check for LAUD:STORM
CENTER OF STUART ENGLAND. Just how this was overlooked I
cannot imagine. We certainly appreciate your kindness in
autographing these books, and I hope you may find it possible
to overlook our carelessness.

Very truly yours

STATE LIBRARIAN

HED /mlh

April 16, 1931

Dr. Robert Tristram Coffin,
Wells College,

Aurora-on-Cayuga, New York.

Dear Dr. Coffin;-

I began the Dukes of Buckingham after breakfast last Sunday morning and church, household chores, etc were neglected until I had finished it. I am grateful to you for a delightful morning.

I found your book intensely interesting, not only as an account of the careers of the two Buckinghams, but as a picture of the period. There is so much in the book that I didn't know, so much that I am glad to know.

"Laud" impressed me with your skill in creating a background, and "The Two Dukes of Buckingham" gives the same vivid sense of actual events and living persons. I have a very sincere admiration for your skill as a biographer and I have no doubt that it will receive from more competent critics than I the recognition which it merits.

Thank you for taking the trouble to inscribe a copy of your book for the Maine Author Collection.

I never overlook a dedication. Who, please, is the Miller Callahan "who has the sparkle of the two Dukes without the flaws"? He must be quite some person!

With best wishes for the success of your very interesting book,

Very truly yours

Signed MCF

WELLS COLLEGE
AURORA-ON-CAYUGA, NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

May 2, 1931.

Miss Maria Cobb Fuller,
Maine State Library,
Augusta, Maine.

Dear Miss Cobb: Thanks for your generous praise of my
Dukes of Buckingham. I am proud of your letter and will
keep it for my file.

Miller Callahan, to whom the book is
dedicated, is a friend of mine. He is all that the dedication
says, & more. He is not so well known yet as he will be
later. He is a composer, especially for the piano. He is a native
of Chicago. But he is living & studying at present in England.

I hope I may have another new book
for your shelves this year, if all goes well.

Cordially yours,

Robert P. Johnston Oppen

July 14, 1931

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin,

Wells College ,

Aurora-on-Cayuga, New York.

Dear Dr. Coffin;-

I have just read with very great interest your narrative poem in the current issue of the Saturday Review of Literature. The story of Richard I did not know , but I gather that he was a real person(certainly you make him seem real) and I should like to know where I can read some more about him , or, if not some more, at least what your sources for the narrative were. I have clipped the poem and shall probably mention it in the Library Bulletin. I shall add to the library copy of the poem such annotations as you can send us about it.

Very truly yours,

(SIGNED MCF)

WELLS COLLEGE
AURORA-ON-CAYUGA, NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Pennellville,
Brunswick, Me.,
July 11, 1931.

Miss Marion Gobb Fuller,
Maine State Library,
Augusta, Maine.

Dear Miss Fuller:

You are right in thinking that my ballad poem, The Schooling of Richard Orr, had a source. It is founded on The Memoirs of Odd Adventures, Strange Deliverances, etc.... of John Gyles, Esq., published at Boston, 1736. The form in which I met the story, however, is as one of the stories in the book, Indian Captivities, or Life in the Wigwam, published for Samuel G. Drake, at Auburn, (Me.?) by Derby and Miller, 1851. Excerpts of Gyles's story as contained in this book of 1851 came out in The Brunswick, (Me.) Record, three summers ago. Perhaps you have this volume by Drake in the State Library. If so, it is well worth reading. I am indebted to G. Allen Howe, Esq., of Brunswick, for the use of his copy.

(or N.Y.?)

I did not, however, translate the whole tale into my ballad. I used the setting, some of the characters, etc., of the first part merely. I then went on to make my ballad the story of a man who, quite unlike John Gyles (who returned to be a famous interpreter in the French and Indian fights), "went completely Indian", as we know from some accounts a few English captives did "go Indian". So, though my poem has an origin and foundation in fact, it is in the main fictitious. I am proud to know that you and others like it. It is one of a whole group of ballads on Maine and American themes in general which I have written and which, some sunny day, I hope may be published in a volume. As yet, only a few of the shorter ballads have been published. You might be interested to look up some of them up in periodicals, viz.: Square-Toed Princes, Books, the N. Y. Herald Tribune, July 27, 1930; Lullaby for Peregrine, the same periodical, May 4, 1930. Two others, Henry Hudson and Hannah Dustin, are to appear in Books and in the Ladies' Home Journal respectively in the near future. When the sunny day comes, I shall bring a copy of the book to Augusta with a great deal of rejoicing.

And I have every hope, within a week or so, to have the pleasure of dropping in to see you at the State House. I have an announcement, (that will, I think, interest you greatly) to make when I do. Suffice it to write now that I have two books on the way to print.

With all best wishes,

Robert P. Tristram Coffin
Robert P. Tristram Coffin

July 14, 1931

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin,

Pennellville,

Brunswick, Maine.

My dear Dr. Coffin;-

Thank you for your very interesting letter about your ballad poem, The Schooling of Richard Orr. We shall make a note of the forthcoming ballads so that we can be sure to obtain them for our files.

We do not have Drake's Indian Captivities, but we have the earlier and similar volume Tragedies of the Wilderness published in Boston in 1842, which also contains the Gyles narrative.

We shall be delighted to see you at the library. Will you please let us know when you are coming. Both Mr. Dunnack and I would be dreadfully disappointed if we missed your call.

Very truly yours,

MAINE STATE LIBRARY

BY MCF

WELLS COLLEGE
AURORA-ON-CAYUGA, NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Pennellville,
Brunswick, Me.,
July 29, 1931.

Dear Miss Fuller:

Just a note to say that
I expect to be in Augusta Friday afternoon,
July 31, & I expect to be able to drop in
to see you then.

If I may, I should like to
bring my brother along, too, as he is driving
me to the city.

Until then,

Sincerely yours,

Robert B. Frostman Oppen

WELLS COLLEGE
AURORA-ON-CAYUGA, NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

August 1, 1931.

Dear Miss Fuller:

Mee culpa!

I got to Augusta too late yesterday to see you - around five P.M. Thanks to R.F.D., I didn't get your note about the time you left until

I got home!

I hope you weren't put out. Don't make any special arrangements for me. I mean to try again this month. I'll start earlier - and not come by way of Camden as yesterday! I'll drop you a line when I plan to go to Augusta again.

Sincerely yours,

Robert P. T. Coffin

note
m.c.f.

Dr. Coffin visited the Maine State Library, Aug. 7, 1931

WELLS COLLEGE
AURORA-ON-CAYUGA, NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

November 23, 1931.

Miss Marion C. Fuller,
Maine State Library, Augusta, Me.

Dear Miss Fuller:

You take them
out with a
flap-jack turner
in stiff rafters!

Baking is the best way of all of cooking smelts. You put them in
side by side all over the bottom of the cake tin (large size!), and lay criss-cross strips
of raw salt pork on them. The oven does the rest. When they come out, they are brown,
crisp & cooked all together into one crackling, resistant, inoffensive mass - Oh, how
I grow weak in the knees to think of them here, so far from the salt water! But it is the
only way to bring out the flavor of these exclusively flavored fish. I am astounded at
Miss Brown's not knowing this method - and she from North Haven! Score one up for
Cass over Penobscot, then!

I hope this makes you good & hungry, for it has made me so.
The Bailey Island drive is one of my favorite ones. I envy you your Amherst Day trips. You
must visit Island - Pond - off to the east.

I enjoyed seeing you, too, at the Portland luncheon.

Mrs. Dummer.

With all best wishes, & please remember me to
Cordially, Robert P. J. Coffin

C O P Y

March 24, 1932

Dr. Robert R. T. Coffin,
Wells College,
Aurora-on Cayuga, New York.

My dear Dr. Coffin;*

I made brief mention of Yoke of Thunder in the April issue of the Bulletin. It seemed too bad to defer until July calling our readers' attention to a new book by you. May we have a copy, autographed, for the Maine Author collection? I was looking at your other collections of verse the other day. I think that Christ Church is my favorite collection; I can't exactly tell why. Which one do you yourself like best?

As soon as the smelt season opened we tried baked smelts, after your recipe. Delicious, better ~~than~~ than fried.

Sincerely yours,

MCF

WELLS COLLEGE
AURORA-ON-CAYUGA, NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

May 21, 1932.

Miss Marion Cobb Fuller,
Maine State Library,
Augusta, Me.

Dear Miss Fuller:

I am sure you will forgive me for my long delay in answering your request for my YOKE OF THUNDER book of poems, when I tell you that I have had to wait until this week to get a copy that was bound acceptably. The first lot of books had uneven pages, and I asked the publishers to do the book over. They have done so. And I am sending you Monday an autographed copy for your Authors' Collection. The cost of the volume is \$1.50.

In answer to your query, I can write that I think the poems in my new book, THE YOKE OF THUNDER, are far away my best. As you can see, they have been published widely, and I have had many letters about them from all over the country. I honestly believe I am maturing as I go on. Robert Frost, by the way, regards this book highly, especially the poems: Crystal Moment, Night-Hawk, He Was of the Forest, and An Old Man Raking Leaves.

You will be pleased to hear, I know, that my PORTRAIT OF AN AMERICAN was reprinted in December, 1931, and again in February, 1932.

On June 20th---next month---I am reading my poem, The Strange Children, as the Phi Beta Kappa Poet at the Harvard Commencement, and I hope I shall look well in tails and a top-hat on that occasion!

I knew you would like the smelts baked. Though it is against all charity, don't tell too many people about the recipe. Let's keep it among ourselves!

Hope to see you this Summeer.

With all best wishes, and please remember me
to Mr. Dunnack.

Cordially yours,


Robert P. Tristram Coffin

C O P Y

June 30, 1932

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin,
Wells College
Aurora-on-Cayuga, New York.

Dear Dr. Coffin:-

I assume that you are back in the country of fish-chowder and baked smelts but you may have gone elsewhere from Harvard so I'll address this letter, which should have been written weeks ago, to Wells College.

Thank you for the copy of The Yoke of Thunder and for taking the trouble to inscribe it and send it to us. We have sent in a bill for it, for you, and sometime after all the necessary red tape has been tied and re-tied you will receive your pay.

The Yoke of Thunder is a lovely collection and I do not wonder that it receives commendation from all over the country. I think that I like best "Wild Swans", but perhaps my favorite is "Crystal Moment".

I am glad to hear of the success of Portrait of an American. I feel that it is a book which will last, that it will have as much value and interest a generation or two from now as it has today.

Signed (M.C.F.)

Maine Author Granted An Honorary Life Membership In The National Arts Club



Robert P. Tristram Coffin, a native of Brunswick and a graduate of Bowdoin College, was recently awarded honorable mention by the National Arts Club in the contest for the best original book expressing the "Soul of America," for his "Portrait of an American." In recognition of his admirable work the board of governors voted him an honorary life membership in the National Arts Club.

Mr. Coffin's "Portrait of an American" is a New England manly character-story, virile, typical of American pioneer spirit in changing environment, and told in such effective literary style that romance and reality

combine to picture one of us as we, the people, have been.

Mr. Coffin has been professor of English at Wells College, Aurora, N. Y., since 1926. He is the author of three books of poems, two books of essays and three biographies prior to the book in the National Arts Club contest.

Mr. Coffin, who was present at the ceremonies was asked to autograph many copies of his book.

October 31, 1934

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
Wells College
Aurora-on-the-Cayuga, New York

Dear Sir:

We are asking Loring, Short and Harmon of Portland, Maine, to forward a copy of your new book, LOST PARADISE, to you, hoping that you will be kind enough to autograph this work, as you have your others.

Please accept our congratulations on adding another achievement to your rapidly lengthening list.

Very truly yours

lm

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
By

Enc;
Return label and four cents postage.

Secretary

November 5, 1934

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
Bowdoin College
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Through a careless error, a letter was mailed to your former address in New York, notifying you that we were having sent a copy of your latest book, LOST PARADISE, from the bookseller.

We hope that you will forgive the grave error, and that you will kindly autograph it, as you have your others in our Maine Author Collection.

Very truly yours

lm

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
By

Secretary

November 21, 1934

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
Bowdoin College
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

We have received *Last Paradise*, so kindly
autographed by you, and we are indeed delighted
to add this volume to our Maine Author Collection.
Please accept our sincere thanks for your coopera-
tion.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
By

Secretary

"Strange Holiness" Is Dr. Coffin's New Book of Poems

(The MacMillan Co., N. Y. City)
When one thinks of Maine writers of verse who have interpreted the homespun life on the farm, the rural rather than the urban, the name of Holman Day comes to mind. It was his gift to tell in ballad form the experiences of cot and meadow, the anecdotes of kitchen and store, and imbue them all with homely philosophy.

Harold Vinal, another Maine poet, turned back to his native granite isle of the sea for the material he has woven into beauty of line and understanding. So also Wilbert Snow, who has the lore of the coastal folk among so much of his verse.

Millay and Robinson have loved the ocean and sung the beauty and the majesty of the deep. But they have not so much been vocal for the tiller of soil, the herdsman, or the wild life of the field and forest.

Now comes Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin of Brunswick, adding to his list of six books of poems—besides other notable literary output—a seventh which was issued the second of this April, "Strange Holiness."

Here is no rhymed prose. The ballad is gone. Short lyrics, many of them in couplet-form, prevail. Titles are commonplace: "Hens in Winter," "The Weather Vane," "The Bull Inside," "The Squash Blossoms," "The Spider," "Wild Bees' Nest" and the like.

But what high spirit! What glamour of poetic discernment! What investiture of beauty! What virile mood! What singing lines! What crisp, crackling originality! The lightning and thunder of his thought play over things trivial to most people and reveal them in a stark, surprising loveliness.

The tempo is kin to that the reader finds in his two last biographies, "Portrait of an American" and "Lost Paradise." In fact, the same background of Maine scenery and customs and ways of thinking which lies behind his prose is to be found here in this new book of poetry. It is powerfully dynamic; and it is wholesome, sweet and sound.

But "Strange Holiness" is more than vivid description; it is poignant appreciation of beauty in the commonplace, with a poetic fire infusing all. Dull themes become radiant. The artist in the poet leaps into the light in such lines as these: When he refers to the snake, "a flowing jewel in the brake"; to the running fox, "Strangeness and secrecy and pride ran rippling down his golden hide"; to the spider, "With six small diamonds for his eyes he walks upon the summer skies, drawing from his silken blouse the lacework of his dwelling-house"; or (to cite one more of scores) to the country church, "the caraway's lace parasols brushed the clapboards of its walls."



ROBERT P. TRISTRAM COFFIN
author of "Strange Holiness"
(Macmillan)

Drawing by Carola Spach, 1927

Longest of these 54 offerings is an original treatment of an airplane experience, which he calls "First Flight". It reveals the poet's poignancy of feeling for little things, details others overlook, impressions too vague for most folks to analyze, which he utters in significant word portrayals. It mingles classic allusions with symbols of the soil. Moreover, it is cosmic in sweep and elemental in philosophy, as so many even of his briefer poems are.

"A man might fly above the hills
or hide
Away from green in cities of made
stones,
The ancient loyalties still found
him out,
They came on him thru air and
thru blue steel
They held him in their everlasting
arms."***
Man's speech was still a mystery,
and his feet
Moved with unpredictable and
strange
Loveliness, like God, upon the
mountains.
His path was wonder, and his
heart a dream,
His ways past finding out, like
faith and love."

Pathos is here in such poems as "The Woodland Orchard" where "one draws a careful breath, this loveliness is so like death"; "The Cupola"; "In the Sunset"; "The Housing of the Lambs". But thru them all is serenity that mocks mere sentiment.

Then there is humor, stealing into gay lines and painting strange

and fanciful pictures as in "The Weather Vanes," which prove to be "the parasols which spread over the nasturtium bed," tilting "if rain is on the way at all" to "make way for rain to reach the clay."

Far more characteristic of the book as a whole, however, is the joy of life ever recurring. It is an hymn, forthrightly acknowledging God. It is the symphony of life in all its moods. There are no negations, no frustrations, no denials; but rich fulfilment in joy and sorrow, in life, in death. Nothing is sinister; nothing macabre. The everlasting order, timeless and puissant, prevails; and the poet sees beauty in it all. The song is vibrant and positive. There are no vague doubts, no wild guessing. Faith lays hold on things eternal and speaks out, clean-cut as from one of the Sons of God.

Not that there is a single preachment here. There may be texts for parsons; but no sermons, other than those in brooks and stones. But one feels the tremendous surge of a religion apart from creeds, moving thru every line to the sure goal of homage and reverence and delight in the unity of a world manifesting the divine at every point.

Beside such a book of poems, puny and trivial are the lesser lights of recent literature, so many of them a phantom efflorescence of stagnant swamps. Dr. Coffin's is a lighthouse set on a ledge for all men to see; and those who follow him will not be likely to wreck their craft on shoals and reefs of negation and futility. "Strange Holiness" is a mariner's guide on the sea of literature today. It will be read and re-read, generation after generation, in this and other lands; and America well may take up the song. It is our best self singing!

A. F. I.

THIS IS MY COUNTRY

This is my country, bitter as the sea,
Pungent with the fir and bayberry.
An island meadow, stonewalled, high, and lost,
With August cranberries touched red by frost.
Two hours of sun before the fog erases
The walls on walls of trees trimmed sharp as laces.
A house behind the last hill of them all,
And after that the lonesome seagull's call;
A juniper upon a windy ledge,
Splendor of granite on the world's bright edge,
A heron on the beach and one on wing,
Wind wrapped round each last and living thing,
A lighthouse like a diamond, cut and sharp,
And all the trees like strings upon a harp.

These are my people, saving of emotion,
With their eyes dipped in the winter ocean,
The lonely, patient ones, whose speech comes slow,
Whose bodies always lean toward the blow,
The enduring and the clean, the tough and clear,
Who live where winter is the word for year
And the briar rose had best be brief,
Where most trees have a dagger for a leaf.
These people are my kindred and my kind.
They have a kind of lighthouse for a mind,
Keeping lit inside because the sun
Is too low to be a trusted one -
The cheerful, crystal people who have had
The chance to know the taste of being sad.

Robert P. Tristram Coffin
February 1935 HARPER'S

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin of Brunswick has said that one of the best poems he ever wrote, in his own opinion, is that which appeared in February Harper's. It was written about Ragged Island, off the Harpswell shores where he spent boyhood playdays. Last summer he renewed acquaintance with the island, no resident being there at the time, tho it was visited for a portion of the season by Edna St. Vincent Millay, present owner. The publication of that poem brought him letters from people in Florida and the Middle West who appreciated the setting and theme.

Bowdoin Professor Extolls Simple Living



Robert P. Tristram Coffin

Author of "Strange Holiness," a poetic interpretation of New England.

Anyone who will read the new book of poems, "Strange Holiness" (MacMillan) will be confirmed in his belief that Robert P. Tristram Coffin, the author, is a real poet. He presents in this latest slim volume of 101 pages 61 poems of varying length from half a dozen couplets to the 13 pages of the only longish poem, "First Flight." The poems are of astonishingly evenness of merit, all fashioned with that charm of manner Coffin has made distinctively his own.

Except for Robert Frost, Coffin is the most important exponent of the New England scene. This is his strength, as it is, in one scene, his weakness. One who is so patently an interpreter of a single area, may, perhaps, forfeit something in popularity. Yet these poems, redolent, let us say, of Maine, have a deft insight into nature and life, a universality that marks poetic eminence.

Coffin, in a true sense, is a poet of the New England soil. His art is marked by a great simplicity and a great homeliness. His theme is announced in the first couplet of the title poem—"There is strange holiness around our common days on common ground." He avoids the merely poetic word to use the natural; he has the gift of specific utterance; he decorates his verse with metaphor rather than with simile; he has a feeling for nature that is an obsession; he is absolutely not a nature-faker. Bees, birds and flowers, barns and plowed fields, the lowing of cows, the fragrance of blossoms and of clover, the spider, the fox and the stars have a verity in his pages that, to one who knows them, is little short of enchanting.

The poems in "Strange Holiness" have an autobiographical quality, a subjective tenderness, that is unique. Each poem illustrates Coffin's theory of poetry that it should capture a moment and make it into a monument, a design built up out of experience. He surely has been writing some of his poems all his life with the aid of memory, "the artist of life."

There is something Whitmanesque in the poet's admiration for the sturdy-thighed farmer, child of the sun, master of his acres, communing with the wind and stars, proud of his own vigor and fertility. To him "the sight of water, and the high furrows leaned against the sky" are the great essentials; he, "shorter-lived than any tree, can stand and feel eternity wheel about him in the far, lonely orbit of a star." Yet he is not aloof, coldly contemplative, speculative; he has discernment for the intimate beauty in bud and thicket; he has human tenderness complementing his sturdy independence.

"Strange Holiness" lacks, one suspects designedly, a merely musical quality. Coffin, though prodigal of jeweled phrase, is never a jingler. He is interested in the satisfying melody of simple life, but the harmonies must be the sympathetic vibrations in the untuned reader. His new book is more than another success in the march of literary Maine; it is a welcome addition to the store of true poetry.

COPY

April 6, 1935.

Dr. Robert P.T. Coffin
Bowdoin College
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

We have ordered a copy of your latest book, STRANGE HOLINESS, to be sent you from the Macmillan Company. We hope that you will be kind enough to autograph this book and send it to us for our Maine Author Collection.

May we congratulate you upon what promises to be a most interesting spring publication.

Very truly yours,
Maine State Library

hm

Secretary

COPY

June 11, 1935

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
Bowdoin College
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

We hesitate to add any business, however slight, to your already full life, but we would like to settle a small matter before your summer vacation, that we may not intrude upon that deserved leisure.

We wrote you on April 6 that we were ordering a copy of your new book, *STRANGE HOLINESS*, to be sent you from the publishers. We hoped that you would in turn inscribe it for our Maine Author Collection and send it on to us. We have received Macmillan's bill and have paid it, but as yet we have not received the book.

Possibly our letter explaining the situation did not reach you, possibly it has been laid aside for a more opportune moment. In any case, we are of course a bit anxious to include this latest volume from the pen of one of America's foremost poets in our Maine Author Collection, and we hope that you will soon find us a few moments in which you can inscribe your name and perhaps an added line or two, as you have previously and graciously done.

Very truly yours,

Maine State Library

hm

Secretary



44 HARPSWELL STREET
BRUNSWICK, MAINE

June 15, 1935.

Miss Hilda McCleod,
Maine State Library,
Augusta, Maine.

Dear Miss McCleod:

I am sorry about the STRANGE HOLINESS business, but, as far as I know, I have not ever received the copy of the book from the publishers. Certainly I cannot find it now, and I usually keep tabs on all such matters. I have been often away from home, however, this spring, and it may be that the book came and was unwrapped by someone here in my absence. It would be safer, another time, to send me the book from the State Library, and then the possibility of its being lost would be lessened.

In case the book does not turn up somewhere soon, either here or with you, I shall see to it that you are sent a copy, with my compliments, as it would not do to have the series broken at this hour!

Sincerely yours,

Robert P. Tristram Coffin
Robert P. Tristram Coffin

COPY

June 22, 1935

Dr. Robert P.T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Your very kind letter of June 15 regarding the missing copy of STRANGE HOLINESS reduces us to an extremely apologetic state. We deeply regret the inconvenience we have caused you, and assure you that in the future we will follow your advice, mailing the book to you from the library.

It is indeed gracious of you to suggest presenting us with a copy, and we appreciate the favor, feeling as you do that "it would not do to have the series broken at this hour!"

The book has not arrived at the library, and as the publishers' records indicate that it was mailed, it was evidently lost in transit. We do hope that it will reach you eventually.

Of course we will be very grateful for the Maine Author copy and are anticipating its arrival. How fortunate we are in having such an interested and cooperative author!

Very truly yours,

Maine State Library

hm

Secretary

COPY

July 20, 1935

Dr. Robert P.T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

STRANGE HOLINESS, your latest masterpiece, has arrived at the library. What words are there to express our appreciation - the inscription, so characteristically delightful; the dedication, with its underlying promise of "Strange Holiness" indeed in the poems following; and then the title poem, with its quick flashes of color, its sudden appeal of tragedy and beauty surely etched from more than words.

There is so much beauty in the book that it is folly to attempt to describe our joy in its author, a Maine man, and our appreciation of the fine work you have done. It is a book to read slowly, to ponder, to think about, and to recommend to those who love true poetry.

Please accept our congratulations upon writing another successful contribution to America's literature, and our sincere thanks for inscribing our copy for the Maine Author collection.

Very truly yours,

Maine State Library

hm

Secretary

October 7, 1935

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

We are sending you a copy of your most recent book, RED SKY IN THE MORNING, which of course we want in our Maine Author Collection. We hope you will be so kind as to inscribe it with one of your unusually delightful messages. A return label and postage is enclosed for your convenience.

We congratulate you upon this splendid novel, not alone for the plot, so very "Maine" in flavor, but especially for the descriptions, which as your publishers accurately write, are "sharp, lovely and exact."

Very truly yours

Maine State Library

hm

Secretary

October 12, 1935

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

We have received the copy of RED SKY IN
THE MORNING, which you have so kindly inscribed.
We are glad to add this important novel to your
books in our Maine Author Collection, and thank
you for your interest in the project.

Very truly yours
Maine State Library

hm

Secretary

RED SKY IN THE MORNING. By Robert P. Tristram Coffin. 288 pp. New York: The Macmillan Company. \$2.50.

*Red sky at night,
Sailor, delight;
Red sky in the morning,
Sailor, take warning.*

IT is from this ancient adage that Robert Coffin takes the title for his finely etched Maine novel of descendants of America's famous days of sail. With those days long since over, the descendants of the Vikings that trod the decks of clippers, unless gone into steam, have either become fisher folk or taken to landward paths. "Red Sky in the Morning" focuses upon the final generation of the Prince family, daring deep-water sailors in the vanished spacious days. There are two brothers, Daniel and Frank, the latter a bachelor, the former the father of two boys, David, 18 when the story opens, and the 15-year-old Will.

Mr. Coffin, we think, has been a shrewd observer of the family which has been forced down from the heights. Its members have turned in upon themselves. They display an infinite amount of courage in keeping at small tasks, but they have not the imagination for larger things which could force their forebears in cockleshells out on the oceans of the world. Hence, Daniel Prince. The tenacity of purpose which had driven old Cap'n Samuel head into a gale which sent him to the bottom, and in sight of home, comes out in Daniel as nothing more than pure mulish stubbornness.

Daniel's wife was still young, still pretty. And she had not looked sidewise at another man in her life. But he had got it into

his head that she was deceiving him behind his back, and had packed himself and his family off to live alone on bleak Whaleboat Island, out of Menhaden, where brother Frank lived in the ancestral Prince mansion of which Daniel was half-owner. Nor is this the worst. David, the idol of his eye, comes down with diphtheria, but so certain is Daniel that he knows as much as any doctor that he will not send for a medical man until it is too late. Mr. Coffin's depiction of the boy, Will, rowing the heavy dory across four miles of storm-swept sea to fetch the Menhaden doctor is a fine bit of writing.

But "Red Sky in the Morning" is the story of Will, not of David or Daniel. And it is the story of a boy turning into manhood, at first not clear what it is all about, and then, coming to a too-swift understanding, making a mess of things and going out, heroically, perhaps, but needlessly. And the starting point is the death of David, for after the burying on Menhaden the wife refuses to resume the lonely life on Whaleboat Island. If Daniel goes, he must go without her. And he chooses to go. And Will has also to choose. He stays with his mother, and both go to live with Uncle Frank.

It is Mr. Coffin's purpose, however, to go below the surface of his narrative; he is not content with episode and drama. If Will loves his mother, he also has always loved his father, loved him with a doglike devotion, although Daniel spurned him for the older David. Will, as he grows up and gets to his studies, looking forward to giving up lobstering for high school and college, has one set un-

derlying purpose, and that is to bring his father and his mother once more together. In an obscene way (Mr. Coffin's handling here is both delicate and honest) he had got at the root of the quarrel between his parents, and as he reaches more and more toward maturity he comes to deeper understanding. He is certain that his mother has been true to her husband, even since cut off from him. But with the coming to Uncle Frank's for the Summer of the latter's cousin Rupert, a cosmopolitan voluptuary, Will sees his mother impressed and wavering. His mind is made up, and in as strange and awesome a scene as novelist might write we see him sacrifice himself for his mother.

"Red Sky in the Morning" is a quietly moving book, indeed at times the narrative seems scarcely to move at all, with such quiet persuasiveness does Mr. Coffin bear upon his reader.

By an odd chance the present writer came to this novel from a reading of Mrs. Rawlings's story of the Florida swamps, "Golden Apples," filled with the lush vegetation, heavy scents and great bearded trees of our tropic region. And the contrast made the austerities of Mr. Coffin's scene stand out doubly defined. Snow-covered in Winter, pleasantly habitable for only a few months in the year, with a few flowers defiantly blooming, the land which Mr. Coffin so ably displays seems natural habitat for such broken down families as he implants thereon, precisely as Mrs. Rawlings's miasmatic fens are the logical habitat of the Crackers she writes of. Startlingly enlightening, such perception of the interrelation of man and his

environment. Mr. Coffin, whose first prose novel this is, although he has done several books of various kinds, has done a careful and immensely sound piece of work. And if one can conceive of a picture which is of itself starkly cold, while at the same time the painting is warmly sympathetic, the paradox sums up "Red Sky in the Morning."

PERCY HUTCHISON.



Jacket Design by J. J. Lankes for "Red Sky in the Morning."

A Poet's Novel of Maine Fishermen

RED SKY IN THE MORNING. By Robert
P. Tristram Coffin. New York: The
Macmillan Co. 1935. \$2.50.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

THE state of Maine, with its wild and beautiful scenery and its monuments of the stately days of sail, has in the last few years inspired several novels; and now Mr. Coffin, who has long been a poet of the region, adds another novel to the number. In "Red Sky in the Morning" he has pressed the contrast between past splendors and present poverty into the service of his theme, which is one-half the theme of "Hamlet": the jealousy felt by an adolescent for his mother's paramour. Young Will Prince can remember the beautiful house which is his family's inheritance from generations of sea captains, but he spends his boyhood in a fisherman's shack on a little island to which his father has moved as a prison for his mother, whose glances, on the mainland, were constantly straying to other men; and when the Princes come to an open breach, and Will is taken by his mother to the great family mansion, he still thinks of his father, living in his squalid hermitage; and is at last obliged to take his father's place and avenge his mother's unfaithfulness. The author deliberately faces the comparison with "Hamlet," letting Will Prince spend a chapter reflecting on how like his position is to that of the Prince of Denmark.

No one would hold Mr. Coffin too strictly to the impossible competition implied; but one cannot help observing that the two qualities for which "Hamlet" is most remarkable are those in which "Red

Sky in the Morning" is most deficient,—subtlety and suspense in action. "Red Sky in the Morning" is, for good and ill, a poet's novel; and though it presents single emotions keenly, it gives no more analysis than one might expect of a lyric. It would seem almost impossible to treat such a theme nowadays without allusion to the theories of Freud; but the whole question of Will's relation to his parents, of why he so deeply loved the father who was never anything but unjust and harsh to him, of what he himself felt toward the mother of whom he was jealous on his father's account, is slurred over. We are merely given as a datum Will's despairing love for the father who does not love him, and its consequences; the mother remains a shadowy wanton. Similarly, the poetic quality of the novel cannot assimilate the villain, the supplanter (who, as in the stories of Hamlet and Agamemnon, is a kinsman) when he appears; he is meant to represent tragic invasion of the vulgar, wealthy world of the summer people; but he remains a caricature, all too obviously determined to characterize himself every time he speaks. And in the management of the prose element of the plot, if the author has by his slow movement and indication of the end attained "inevitability," he has done so only at the cost of all suspense.

And yet it must be repeated that if the book has the faults of a poet's prose, it has its virtues too. It is written in a style which one may call by that rarely deserved word, beautiful; and if it presents only the simple, single emotions of a lyric, it does so with all a lyric's haunting intensity. In its painting of the separate scenes, the struggle of a rowboat with a winter sea, the dusty treasures of a sea-captain's house, or the intensity of a Maine summer, "Red Sky in the Morning" is as fine as any of the fine books that depict that beautiful state.

November 13, 1936

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Your new book is receiving such praise and popularity that our words seem inadequate to express to you our pride in you as a Maine author, and your novel as a Maine book.

JOHN DAWN is truly a remarkable picture of Maine: remarkable in its veracity, its strength and beauty, its entire scope.

We hope you will continue your past generous interest in the Maine Author Collection, and will inscribe for us a copy of JOHN DAWN. We are always delighted when we are able to add another of your books to this collection, for each one signifies to us an added distinction not only to the collection, but also to the State of Maine.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

lm

SECRETARY

1794

BOWDOIN COLLEGE
BRUNSWICK, MAINE

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

November 16, 1936

Miss Hilda McLeod,
Maine State Library,
Augusta, Maine.

Dear Miss McLeod:

Surely, I shall be very proud to inscribe
a copy of my John Dawson for the Maine Authors collection.
Please send the book on to me, and I shall see to the
matter. I am delighted that you like my novel so much.

Cordially yours,

Chas. F. Tustman Oppie

November 17, 1936

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Thank you for your letter. We are asking Campbell's Book Store of Portland, Maine, to send you a copy of JOHN DAWN at once.

We will be very grateful to you for inscribing this copy and sending it on to us for the Maine Author Collection, and we enclose a label and postage for your convenience.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hm
Enc

SECRETARY

November 25, 1936

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

This is to acknowledge, formally,
the copy of JOHN DAWN which you so
kindly inscribed for the Maine Author
Collection.

Tuesday evening's discourse (a most
stilted word for the delightful presen-
tation of your poems!) was indeed a
privilege, and one which will not soon
be forgotten.

We are looking forward to the
book of poems in February. I do hope
your lovely poem about the Kennebec
fogs will be included.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hm

SECRETARY

HENRY E. DUNNACK
STATE LIBRARIAN
THERESA C. STUART
ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN



Maine State Library

AUGUSTA

March 12, 1937

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Recently a patron inquired of us whether or not we had a copy of the poem of blueberrying which you read before a Rockland audience. This patron would like very much to have the poem within a week.

We searched diligently, but so far we have not found the poem, though both Miss Stuart and I remember it -- did you not read it in Augusta last fall?

We are therefore asking you if you can tell us where and when it was published; or if it has not been published, is it in SALTWATER FARM? Is there any way in which we might secure a copy to send to our Rockland inquirer?

We enclose a return envelope for your convenience, and of course we will be very grateful for any assistance you may give us.

Dear Miss McLeod:

*This poem - The Secret - is in
Saltwater Farm. All she has to do
is get a copy of that book.*

R. P. T. Coffin

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

Hilda Nichols

SECRETARY

by Robert Peter Tristram Coffin

Cows are coming home
 in Maine
Through juniper and bayberry,
And half the world is
 lacy fir,
And half the world is sea.
Along the stone walls
 and the dusk
The cowpaths come up
 very steep,
The cowbells mingle
 with the bells
That ring on reefs
 and on the deep.

It is growing dark,
 and stars
And lighthouse lamps
 burn through the blue,
But the ferns still
 show up green
With the afterglow
 and dew.

The cows come swinging,
 nose and tail,
With day's light on their
 western sides,
Clean and homely from
 the fields
Sloping to mystery
 and the tides.
Their mouths are full
 of wild sweet things,
But they move their
 fragrant cud
Side to side, as if they had
Nothing but comfort
 in their blood.

Under the nighthawks
 high and strange,
Through beauty which is
 almost pain,
Thro' wild juniper by the sea,
The cows are coming home
 in Maine.

March 15, 1937

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Thank you for the information regarding
THE SECRET. We have sent it to the Rockland
inquirer.

A copy of SALT WATER FARM is being sent
to you by Campbell's Book Store in Portland,
and we hope that you will inscribe it for the
Maine Author Collection. We enclose a
return label and postage, and will, as always,
appreciate your kindness.

It is quite eventful to know that two
of your books are being published this spring,
and we anticipate the pleasure and satisfaction
of not only the poetry of SALT WATER FARM, but
also the historical contribution of KENNEBEC:
CRADLE OF AMERICA. You have our sincere
congratulations, and our continued pride in
claiming you as a Maine author.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hm

SECRETARY

March 17, 1937

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Once again we thank you for inscribing a book for the Maine Author Collection. And once again it is our privilege to congratulate you upon a volume of poems which are deeply Maine, and should certainly strike a most responsive chord in Maine readers.

The many hundreds who have read your other books; and who have heard you read the poems, will of course be enthusiastically pleased, but we in Maine know and love the "Roman legions" of fog, "the taste of being sad," the "footsteps of flame," the boy on the stoop with his bowl of fragrant milk, the "long, cool whisper of the scythe."

These poems merit unusual praise and attention, but perhaps the simplest way to tell you that we like and appreciate them is just to say -- Thank you for writing them.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

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SECRETARY

March 23, 1937

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

We have just received the copy of
SALTWATER FARM which you must have mailed
yesterday. We did not intend to trouble
you with two copies, but we thank you very,
very much for inscribing this one and
sending it to us.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hm

SECRETARY

June 24, 1937

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

May we add our congratulations to those of your other friends on such a fascinating and successful book as KENNEBEC. We are delighted with it, of course, and thoroughly agree with all the reviewers who say such truths as "Only a poet could have written the book." Indeed we have much for which to be grateful in claiming you as a Maine author.

We are asking the Eastern News Company of Portland, Maine, to send you a copy, which we hope you will inscribe for the Maine Author Collection. A return label and postage is enclosed for your convenience in mailing the volume to us.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

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Encl--2

SECRETARY

July 12, 1937

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

About two weeks ago we received the bill from The Eastern News Company of Portland, Maine, whom we had asked to send you a copy of your fascinating new book, KENNEBEC.

We hesitate to trouble you further, but it occurs to us that you may have inscribed the book, mailed it, and that it may have been lost on its way to us.

We hope that it is only the busy days of vacation which have caused the delay. We are, of course, anxious to include the inscribed copy in the Maine Author Collection, and we enclose a stamped envelope; would you be so kind as to use it to tell us whether or not the book has been mailed?

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

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Encl--1

SECRETARY

July 17, 1937

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

KENNEBEC has arrived, and we are deeply grateful to you for your kindness and time spent in inscribing the book and mailing it for the Maine Author Collection.

Our lending copy is always out, with patrons waiting for it; several of the library staff have purchased personal and gift copies. It must, indeed, be a satisfaction to see everywhere the praise and success which KENNEBEC receives, although, after all, what else might we expect from a history of a river written so amusingly and vitally!

Thank you again for your unfailing generosity and interest.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

lm

SECRETARY

September 21, 1938

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

We have asked Campbell's Book Store to send a copy of MAINE BALLADS, and also NEW POETRY OF NEW ENGLAND to you. Will you be so kind as to inscribe them for the Maine Author Collection and mail them to us? We enclose a label and postage for your convenience.

We are eager to see MAINE BALLADS, and of course have ordered a copy for lending purposes. The reviews are all favorable, which is no more than we expected! Congratulations to you, and may your fine books continue.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

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Encls.

SECRETARY

October 3, 1938

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Thank you very much for kindly inscribing
MAINE BALLADS and NEW POETRY OF NEW ENGLAND for
the Maine Author Collection. These are truly
distinctive additions, and we are proud that
Maine may claim the author.

Particularly are we glad that you have
written about such poetry as you have helped
make. We know of no one more fitted for the
task, and we are certain that NEW POETRY OF
NEW ENGLAND will prove of excellent worth.

MAINE BALLADS we find to be all that we
expected, and we are delighted to have the
opportunity of recommending another of your
admirable books.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

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SECRETARY

June 5, 1939

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
Brunswick
Maine.

Dear Dr. Coffin:

It gives us pleasure to notice that we may now add another of your outstanding volumes to the Maine Author Collection; and we are therefore requesting Mr. A. J. Huston of Portland to forward to your address a copy of your collection of poems, recently published.

Will you be so kind as to inscribe it for the Maine exhibit, and send it to us under the label and postage enclosed for your convenience?

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

SECRETARY

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June 15, 1939

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
Brunswick
Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Your kindness in inscribing the copy of
COLLECTED POEMS for the Maine Author Collection
is very much appreciated, and we are adding it
to your other volumes with sincere pride.

Please accept our thanks for your courtesy
and cooperation.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

SECRETARY

hm

October 31, 1939

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

One of the major literary delights of the season, we feel certain, will be your recently published CAPTAIN ABBY AND CAPTAIN JOHN.

We are requesting the Personal Book Shop of Boston to send you a copy. Will you be so kind as to inscribe it for the Maine Author Collection, and send it to us, under the enclosed label and postage.

We look forward with pleasure to the reading of such a fine book as this promises to be, and we send you our sincere wishes for its success.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

SECRETARY

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Encls --2

November 10, 1939

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Our thanks are due to you for your kind cooperation in inscribing the Maine Author Collection copy of CAPTAIN ABBY AND CAPTAIN JOHN, which we believe to be one of the season's outstanding books. It's a good story, and it's good history: a book which we are proud to add to the library.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

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SECRETARY

April 15, 1941

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Congratulations again, and this time, we notice, on a most unusual type of novel. THOMAS-THOMAS-ANCIL-THOMAS is the sort of book that sets people talking -- readers and reviewers alike; and we are eagerly awaiting opportunity to read it for ourselves. The notices which we have seen have been commendatory, and we wish a hearty welcome for the book.

Of course the Maine Author Collection must have an inscribed copy, and so we are asking the Personal Book Shop in Boston to send you THOMAS-THOMAS-ANCIL-THOMAS. Will you continue your kindness in this project, and inscribe it for us, returning it under the enclosed label and postage? We shall appreciate the privilege of adding your latest volume to the shelves of this exhibit.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hmj
Encls--2

SECRETARY

April 15, 1941

The Personal Book Shop, Inc.
95 St. James Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts

Gentlemen:

Please send a copy of THOMAS-THOMAS-ANCIL-
THOMAS to the author,

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

and the invoice to us.

Very truly yours

hmj

MAINE STATE LIBRARY

April 21, 1941

Dear Mrs. Jacob:

Mr. Coffin is at Indiana University lecturing until May seventh.

I am sure he will be glad to inscribe his new book for you upon his return.

Yours truly,
Ruth Coffin
(Mrs. R. P. T. Coffin)

April 23, 1941

Mrs. R. P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Mrs. Coffin:

It is kind indeed of you to write to us about the absence of Dr. Coffin. We shall be patient until his return, when THOMAS-THOMAS-ANCIL-THOMAS may be inscribed for the Maine Author Collection.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hmj

SECRETARY

May 13, 1941

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Once again we send our sincere thanks for your kindness in inscribing the Maine Author Collection copy of THOMAS-THOMAS-ANCIL-THOMAS. It is one of the most unusual novels that we have been privileged to read and to claim as Maine work. It is arresting and beautiful. It will probably share criticism and praise; and it is a work upon which you are to be warmly congratulated.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hmj

SECRETARY

November 19, 1941

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Your utterly charming CHRISTMAS IN MAINE came to us yesterday; and we are sending, under separate cover, the copy for the Maine Author Collection. Will you continue your kindness and inscribe it for us? The enclosed label and postage are for your convenience in returning the little book.

This is delightful -- we are very glad that it has been put between covers; and it happens that several copies were purchased instantly by members of our staff, which is probably a fair indication of the appeal it will make to the public.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hmj
Encls--2

SECRETARY

November 25, 1941

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Thank you so much for inscribing the lovely
CHRISTMAS IN MAINE for the collection. It is
with great pleasure that we add this little book
to your others.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hmj

SECRETARY

March 30, 1942

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

For the Maine Author Collection, we need a copy of THERE WILL BE BREAD AND LOVE; and so we are asking Campbell's Book Store in Portland to send you a copy.

You know, of course, that the inscriptions distinguish this exhibit of Maine books; and we are asking that you will contribute this individual touch to our copy. We shall be most appreciative.

The reviews seem to be as favorably impressed with your simplicity, sympathy, faith in human nature and love of beauty as ever; and we look forward with keen pleasure to reading the new book.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hmj
Encls: label and postage

SECRETARY

April 13, 1942

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Your lovely inscription in THERE WILL BE BREAD AND LOVE is much the most enchanting that we have seen in a long time. You were very kind to distinguish your latest volume by this unusually charming means, and we thank you.

The poems bear testimony that the reviewers are right. We like the simplicity of the poems, the deftness with which you write of the real things: tides, homes, food, pines, small boys. The title poem is an especially good one to have in the present.

Our appreciation and good wishes go to you; and a particular word of thanks for the coast home, and water, and free birds of your delightful inscription.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hmj

SECRETARY

October 23, 1942

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

It is possible that the lovely idea of a pen-and-ink sketch which you did for THERE WILL BE BREAD AND LOVE will not seem to you appropriate for THE SUBSTANCE THAT IS POETRY. At any rate, for the Maine Author Collection, will you inscribe and send on to us the copy of the latter which will reach you shortly from Campbell's Book Store?

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hmj
Encls--2

SECRETARY

October 26, 1942

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Apparently we should have waited another day or two: we notice that your BOOK OF UNCLES is out. This sounds delightful, and we can scarcely wait to see it. A copy will come to you from Campbell's Book Store, intended for the Maine Author Collection. Will you please inscribe it for us? A label is enclosed under which you may mail the book to us.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hmj
Encl--1

SECRETARY

October 30, 1942

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

THE SUBSTANCE THAT IS POETRY and BOOK OF
UNCLES have been received, and we appreciate
your kindness in adding inscriptions for these
exhibit copies.

THE SUBSTANCE THAT IS POETRY was purchased
for the lending section of the library, and we
are now glad to have this fine and interesting
book in the Maine Author Collection.

As for BOOK OF UNCLES -- it is wonderful!
Many hours of enjoyment are held between its
bright covers, and we are certain that your
readers will be delighted with these observations
and tales of that special race of men. Thank
you, too, for the beautiful Maine sketch which
you have drawn as an inscription. It is a
charming touch and wholly distinctive. A long
a happy life to the book!

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hmj

SECRETARY

July 16, 1943

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Your enchanting and at the same time invigorating new book, PRIMER FOR AMERICA, is in our lending section, along with your other volumes. Now we are concerned that it shall also join your work in the Maine Author Collection; and we are therefore sending a copy to you for the customary inscription.

Enclosed are return postage and label for your convenience.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hmj
Encls.

SECRETARY

July 24, 1943

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

The return of PRIMER FOR AMERICA, inscribed
for the Maine Author Collection, is acknowledged.
Please accept our thanks for your kindness, and
our best wishes for the book.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hmj

SECRETARY

September 1, 1944

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Notice of a new book by you is always hailed with delight, and especially are we glad of the pleasure promised by the announcement of MAINSTAYS OF MAINE-- a felicitous title!

It will be a fine addition to the Maine Author Collection; and in connection with this exhibit, it is possible that you may be favorably disposed toward a slight change in the usual procedure. For some years, we have purchased not only the lending copies of your books, but also the Maine Author Collection copies. Our general policy is always to purchase Maine people's non-fiction for the individual loan section; and, as you probably know, our traveling libraries contain the fiction of the library.

It occurs to us that you might (possibly proudly) like to share the pleasure of building up this collection. Very nearly every Maine author seems to derive a satisfaction in inscribing his or her books and presenting them to this collection -- Kenneth Roberts, Mary Ellen Chase, Rufus M. Jones; and our "adopted" authors such as Gladys Hasty Carroll, Elinor Graham, Ben Ames Williams -- all these, and of course, countless others have shown a generous interest in the project.

We look forward eagerly to the publication of MAINSTAYS OF MAINE, and wish it great good fortune. We shall hope, too, that you may want to inscribe a copy for the Maine Author Collection.

Sincerley yours

hmj
Encl--1

Secretary

November 7, 1944

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

You would be pleased, we think, to see how eagerly our patrons are reading MAINSTAYS OF MAINE, and how impatiently they are awaiting their turn -- for there are people waiting.

We have not heard from you in answer to our letter of September 1; but that is, we hope, because of pressure of other business, and not because you do not want to help increase the size and distinction of the Maine Author Collection with an inscribed copy of your newest book.

Perhaps, however, you may think we have been presumptuous. So many Maine authors do enjoy this generosity that we believed you might also. On the other hand, there are a very few who have said quite frankly that they cannot afford to make a gift, even to a collection of permanence, and the only one in their native state of native authors; and there are three or four who have said with equal candor, that their policy was never to make gifts, inasmuch as they were writing solely for financial returns. Although we are grateful and appreciative toward the authors who do present their books, we understand that the others cannot or do not observe the pleasant custom through sincere convictions, and we make every effort to purchase the book for the collection. Because our budget is limited, this often means that we cannot also purchase a lending copy, but we are hopeful that some day our appropriation can be enlarged to encompass such purchases.

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
November 7, 1944

-2-

We hope you will not mind our having explained in detail about the matter. We hope that you will want to inscribe and present a copy of MAINSTAYS OF MAINE to the Maine Author Collection; but if you do not care to, or feel that you cannot, we shall secure a copy as soon as possible to be included on the shelves. Your books are too important to be missing from this exhibit!

Meanwhile, our very best wishes for its continuing success.

Sincerely yours

hmj

Secretary



44 HARPSWELL STREET
BRUNSWICK, MAINE

November 8, 1944

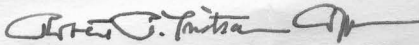
Mrs. F. W. Jacob,
Maine State Library,
Augusta, Maine.

Dear Mrs. Jacob:

Thanks for your letter.

It seems to me your change in policy in regard to the acquisition of ~~Maine~~ authors' books is most unwise. I do not feel able to cooperate, not because of the financial element involved, but because of the principle involved. It seems to me that if ~~Maine~~ authors are worth collecting, they are worth being paid for their books. Why should poets and novelists be regarded as people whose goods are free? Doctors and lawyers are not so regarded. And from experience I have learned that things that are free, are lightly esteemed, in the long run.

Sincerely yours,


Robert P. Tristram Coffin

November 9, 1944

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Thank you very much for letting us know definitely your policy regarding complimentary copies of your books. Miss Stuart is anxious that you know, however, that our policy is not a new one: it was incorporated by Dr. Dunnack in the general policy of the Maine Author Collection, with the understanding that exceptions would be made, if at all financially possible, in cases where authors did not feel that they could make gifts.

Your mention of doctors and lawyers leads us to say that Gleason L. Archer and Dr. Fred H. Albee present their books. We do understand your principles about the matter; and, respecting them, we will continue the purchase of your books for the Maine Author Collection, along with the two other Maine-born writers who share your convictions -- Edna St. Vincent Millay and Walter Piston.

Your statement will help us avoid future requests.

We are asking Campbell's Book Store in Portland to send you a copy of MAINSTAYS OF MAINE, and are enclosing a return label so that you may send it on to us. Will you be so kind as to add an inscription?

Sincerely yours

lmj
Encl.--1

Secretary



44 HARPSWELL STREET
BRUNSWICK, MAINE

November 10, 1944

Miss Theresa Stuart,
State Librarian,
Maine State Library,
Augusta, Maine.

Dear Miss Stuart:

The letter of Mrs. F. W. Jacob, your Secretary, of November 9, is a revelation to me of very dubious principles behind your "Maine Authors' Collection". I wonder if she is representing your own point of view. She makes the Collection seem to me as just another "organizational" project, without much genuine interest in letters or human nature or any other enduring and fundamental idea back of it.

When a person ventures to disapprove of your methods, the tone of your Secretary changes, and she writes as if he were someone who had committed some kind of sin. I wrote Mrs. Jacob a letter of honest objection to your asking authors to pay for their own books. She replies with a cold note implying that I was wrong in my objection, informing me that I am among a small minority---whom she named---and telling me that hereafter the Maine State Library would make an exception and buy my books and merely ask me to autograph them.

If your policy is really as shortsighted as this letter implies, please do not give yourself the trouble to have me autograph my books at all. You can always procure them, with a bare and impersonal autograph, from the Brunswick bookstore, F. W. Chandler and Son. I certainly do not care to trouble myself further with doing anything of a very personal nature for your Collection.

And will you please advise Mrs. Jacob and all your staff that you have no right whatsoever to publicize the names of people who do not fall in with your pattern of procedure. No Maine man but will resent this infringement of minority rights. It is all of a piece with the "organizational" coercions so much in vogue in America today. And if it comes to my attention that you hereafter list me as one who does not present his books to your Collection, I shall have to take steps to publicize what I believe sincerely to be your shortsighted policy.

Let me remind you that I have taken a good deal of pains in the past to make my books of more value to your Collection than the usual impersonal acquisitions of most libraries. I did this because I believed your idea was a fine one. It now appears that my pains were labor lost.

Once, I had thought of the Maine Author Collection as a possible place for some of my MSS to go to, eventually. But now I think I should not care to choose such an impersonal place for the preservation of my work.

It seems to me, too, that if you manage to estrange enough authors, by using the strong-arm methods of the sellers of Tuberculosis Stamps, even the least laudable features of your project will go by the board.

Very sincerely yours,


Robert P. Tristram Coffin

November 21,

1944

Dear Dr. Coffin,

I am so sorry that anything in Mrs. Jacob's letter seemed to you uncalled for. She wrote it only at my special request as I was over anxious, I suppose, to have you know that I had not, in the slightest, changed the policy established for the Maine Author Collection by Dr. Dunnack. Our hearts are in this collection and we have always been grateful for your books. I personally have many in my own personal library, and the library lending copy of MAINSTAYS already has eight reserves on it!

I read Mrs. Jacob's letter and saw that it was only assuring you that we would continue as formerly, respecting your feeling about the matter and we even proceeded as usual, asking Mr. Campbell to send you a copy of MAINSTAYS.

I feel that if you will come in and call on us sometime we can show you, happily, the collection and place our selves in you good grace, once again. I feel so badly about it all I do not know just what to say, further.

Sincerely,

November 25, 1944

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

The Maine Author Collection of MAINSTAYS OF MAINE has arrived this morning, and we are delighted to add another of your volumes to the exhibit. Thank you very much for adding the inscription. Our good wishes for the success of the book continues.

Sincerely yours

hmj

Secretary

April 9, 1945

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Notice has reached us that we may expect a new volume of yours, POEMS FOR A SON WITH WINGS. In accordance with custom, we are asking Campbell's Book Store, of Portland, to send you a copy when it is available, which we trust you will be so kind as to inscribe and return under the enclosed label and postage for the Maine Author Collection.

Sincerely yours

hmj
Encls.

Secretary

May 28, 1945

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

POEMS FOR A SON WITH WINGS has probably reached you by now, for Campbell's Book Store notifies us that it was sent about a week ago. We shall be appreciative of your kindness if you will inscribe the book for inclusion in the Maine Author Collection, and return it to the library under the postage and label sent to you on April 9. We look forward to seeing your latest volume of poetry, and wish the book unlimited success.

Sincerely yours

hmj

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

June 5, 1945

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

The strong graceful sea gull introduced
us compatibly to POEMS FOR A SON WITH WINGS.
Surely some of your most felicitous poems are
contained in this latest book! Thank you
very much for inscribing the Maine Author
Collection copy.

Sincerely yours

hmj

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

Granite's a Model

By Robert P. Tristram Coffin

TWO in the bone-orchard should be
For each one in the orchard tree—
That is the proper ratio;
New England's small towns prove it so.

A man will toe the hard mark right
When he is in his grandmother's sight,
Though his grandmother is a granite
Shaft where all who pass may scan it.

Small boys will mind their P's and Q's
And not wade puddles in good shoes
When he who made and loved them lies
Under the grassy hill all eyes.

Ten men quiet for one in love;
When straight old good men lie above
A white town they kept neat as a pin,
It will be hard for a man to sin.

New England dead are not the dead,
They are judges of heart and head;
And he who knows them has a start
On a character and a heart.

It's no wonder New England raises
Good men common as white daisies;
The best ones here are granite stones,
And granite's a model for young bones.

The Southwest Review

Summer 1945

October 15, 1946

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

In accordance with the custom, we are asking Campbell's Book Store to send you a copy of PEOPLE BEHAVE LIKE BALLADS. Will you be so kind as to inscribe it so that we may include it in the Maine Author Collection, and send it on to us under the enclosed label and postage?

Sincerely yours,

hmj
Encls.

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

November 12, 1946

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

The inscribed copy of PEOPLE BEHAVE LIKE BALLADS for the Maine Author Collection arrived today; and once again we express appreciation for your kindness in adding the delightful and original inscription in the form of the coastal sketch. This is especially appealing, and adds greatly to the charm of this new collection of your poems. Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,

hmj

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

People Behave Like Ballads

Robert P. Tristram Coffin is a hard man on book critics. Hard, we say, because his industry in turning out books of poetry taxes their ingenuity in saying good things about him and his work in fresh fashion. If only he would produce poor work for a change, a reviewer could find something new and different to



Robert P. T. Coffin

say readily. But Coffin apparently is only capable of good, and a reviewer, after saying time and time again just how good he is, is hard pressed to escape repeating himself.

The latest Coffin book is *People Behave Like Ballads* (The MacMillan Co.), a collection of narrative poems in his best manner. They were written during the last eight years and some of them have figured prominently in his popular readings of his work. They are poems on human nature, with the usual Coffin insight into people, the New England life and philosophy. Here is sentiment and humor, shrewd observation, and the authentic atmosphere which distinguishes Coffin poetry.

Coffin's admirers will enjoy the more than 50 poems in this book as thoroughly as any he has penned, and any who are not acquainted with him, if there be such, will find in them abundant explanation for his position among the best of contemporary American poets. For here again is Coffin's robust style, pungent with taste, color, sound, surging with pride for his part of the earth, and heartily alive to the goodness of life.

—R. B. B.

July 18, 1947

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

We have asked Campbell's Book Store to send you
a copy of YANKEE COAST, which we hope you will be so
kind as to inscribe and forward to us for the Maine
Author Collection.

We enclose postage and label for your convenience.
Please accept our good wishes for the success of
your latest book.

Sincerely yours

hmj
Encls.

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

August 6, 1947

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

It is a pleasure to be able to add YANKEE COAST to the Maine Author Collection, and to observe the charming inscriptive sketch. It is very kind of you to add this distinctive touch to the book, and we appreciate your interest.

YANKEE COAST seems to be enjoying a rousing welvome from reviewers, and we see no reason why your enthusiastic public will not endorse the reviewers' glowing opinions.

Sincerely yours

hmj

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

June 16, 1948

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Under separate cover we are sending to you a copy of your new volume of poems. It is for the Maine Author Collection, and we hope that you will be kind enough to add one of your distinctive inscriptions for us.

Enclosed are a label and postage for the return of the book.

Sincerely yours

hmj
Encls.

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

July 9, 1948

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Thank you very much for so kindly inscribing
with the unusual and graceful deer your latest
volume of poems. We add it to the Maine Author
Collection with great pleasure and pride.

Sincerely yours

hmj

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

July 13, 1949

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear R. Coffin:

A copy of ONE HORSE FARM will reach you from Campbell's Book Store in Portland. This is for the Maine Author Collection. We have been unable to purchase books for a number of weeks because of the inadequacies of our budget, and we are glad that at last this new book is to be placed beside your others in the collection. We hope you will find it convenient to inscribe and return to us ONE HORSE FARM.

Sincerely yours

hmj
Encls.

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

July 27, 1949

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Thank you very much indeed for inscribing your newest book of poems, ONE-HORSE FARM, for the Maine Author Collection.

It is an inviting little home that you have inscribed, and I am sure it looks toward blue salt water. This book seems to us to hold more charm and appeal than your earlier volumes of poetry, popular though they were and are. Perhaps it is the unusually skillful and perceptive phrasing of age-old truths and beauties. Perhaps it is the lovely illustrations which add so much to the atmosphere of the poems and to the delight of the reader. At any rate, we congratulate you upon ONE-HORSE FARM, and send our appreciation for your kindness in inscribing the collection copy.

We notice that we may expect COAST CALENDAR before long, and we look forward to that. When it is available, we will have a copy sent to you and will write to enclose the return label and postage.

Sincerely yours

hmj

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

August 17, 1949

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

A copy of COAST CALENDAR will reach you, sent from Campbell's Book Store in Portland. Will you be kind enough to inscribe it and send it on to us for the Maine Author Collection? We enclose a label and postage.

Sincerely yours

hmj

Encls.

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

September 8, 1949

Mr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Mr. Coffin:

Thank you for so beautifully inscribing an unusually lovely book. We are full of admiration for the spell of enchantment which you weave with skilful words, and for the delightful illustrations. COAST CALENDAR is being added to the Maine Author Collection with a great deal of pleasure.

Sincerely yours

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

hmj

February 1, 1950

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Campbell's Book Store, Portland, Maine, will
send you a copy of your new book, THE THIRD HUNGER
and the poem aloud, which we hope you will be kind
enough to inscribe for the Maine Author Collection
and return to us under the enclosed label and
postage. The book is already in the lending section of
the library, but the collection lacks a copy.

Sincerely yours

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

hmj
Encls.

February 21, 1950

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Thank you very much for the distinctive
inscription in THE THIRD HUNDER AND THE POEM
ALoud. We are placing it with pride in the
Maine Author Collection.

We are happy to see that we may expect
another book before long. MAINE DOINGS promises
to be the kind of book which is extremely popular
with many types of readers, and we look forward
to its publication, for we shall want it in the
library, and also in the collection.

Sincerely yours

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

hmj

April 12, 1950

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Campbell's Book Store in Portland has been asked to send you a copy of MAINE DOINGS. When it arrives, would you be so kind as to add your inscription and send it on to us for inclusion in the Maine Author Collection? We enclose a label and postage for your convenience.

We have the book in the lending section of the library, and are glad to see that it is in demand by discriminating readers, and already a favorite Maine book.

Sincerely yours

hmj
Encls.

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

May 9, 1950

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Thank you for inscribing MAINE DOINGS with the lovely sketch. One can almost hear the sharp cries and feel the spray.

We are proud and glad to add your latest book to the Maine Author Collection, and appreciate your adding this touch of distinction for us.

Sincerely yours

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

September 28, 1950

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

It is good news that we may expect another book, APPLES BY OCEAN: and when it is published, Campbell's Book Store of Portland will send to you a copy at our request.

We hope you will inscribe it for the Maine Author Collection.

Congratulations and good wishes to the new book.

Very truly yours

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

hmj
Encls.

October 26, 1950

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

For about two weeks, we have had Mr. Campbell's bill for the copy of APPLES BY OCEAN which he sent to you at our request. It may be that your schedule has been too full to give any attention to inscribing books, but we thought it best to write. If you did not receive the book, we should appreciate knowing. If you did, we shall just be patient until you have an opportunity to inscribe it for the collection.

Sincerely yours

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

hmj

October 31, 1950

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Thank you very much for adding the charming sketch to the Maine Author Collection copy of your new book of poems, APPLES BY OCEAN. We are very pleased to be able to add this sparkling collection to your other work.

Sincerely yours

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

hmj

June 14, 1951

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Will you be so kind as to continue inscribing
Maine Author Collection copies of your books?
Campbell's Book Store will send you a copy of ON THE
GREEN CARPET, which we hope you will inscribe and
return to us under the enclosed label and postage.

Sincerely yours

hmj
Encls.

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

July 6, 1951

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Thank you very much for inscribing with your particularly graceful bird and fruit the Maine Author Collection copy of ON THE GREEN CARPET.

We add this newest book about "cheerful, crystal people" to the collection with our usual pleasure and appreciation of your literary and artistic eminence.

Sincerely yours

hmj

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

November 19, 1951

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Campbell's Book Store is mailing to you a copy
of NEW ENGLAND, which we hope you will be so kind as
to inscribe for the Maine Author Collection, and
send on to us under the enclosed label and postage.

Sincerely yours

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

hmj
Encis.

December 17, 1951

Dr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

Thank you very much for inscribing the copy of the Life in America NEW ENGLAND for the Maine Author Collection copy. We appreciate your forthright words. It is true that this is not the kind of books which we usually have from your gifted pen, and the editors very likely wanted all the books in the series to conform in appearance and content.

It has, however, been made unusual by your candid criticism!

Sincerely yours

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

hmj

November 4, 1954

Dr. Robert P. T. Coffin
44 Harpswell Street
Brunswick, Maine

Dear Dr. Coffin:

HELLAS REVISITED is a charming and unusual book, and quite took us by surprise. So far we haven't found it listed anywhere, although we should very much like to buy a copy for the library, and to note it in the Bulletin of the Maine Library Association. Is it to be generally available?

We are indeed warmly grateful for your remembering the Maine Author Collection.

Sincerely yours

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

hmj

